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ABSTRACT

A study examined gender stereotyping in an outdoor adventure education program. Observations, interviews, and document reviews involving 138 adolescent students from 8 schools attending a residential outdoor education center in Queensland (Australia) found the following gender stereotypes: boys are physically stronger than girls; boys are practical and do things whereas girls plan ahead; boys are clowns; girls are bossier than boys; boys are more competitive than girls; and girls have better relationship skills than boys. Gender stereotyping provided structure and order that gave a sense of safety and familiarity to many participants. It also regulated behavior, placed limits on perceived abilities, and accorded different situational statuses to girls and boys. It was predominantly boys who were accorded the highest status, based upon their perceived greater physical strength and the way they claimed leadership and power. It was more difficult for girls' voices to be heard within this structure. Stereotyping worked through the assertion of power and control. Different types and levels of power were observed. The most obvious form was seen in who set the "tone" of the group, usually a boy or group of boys, who were loud, strong, and popular. Some boys asserted their power through physical strength and by taking the lead on the trail. Some girls asserted their power through group maintenance tasks. Some girls and boys demonstrated their empowerment through resistance of gender-stereotyped roles. Implications for practice are discussed. (TD)

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If the Dress Fits, Wear It: Uncovering Meaning in Gender Stereotyping in an Australian Outdoor Education Program

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IF THE DRESS FITS, WEAR IT: UNCOVERING MEANING IN GENDER STEREOTYPING IN AN AUSTRALIAN OUTDOOR EDUCATION PROGRAM

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades in outdoor adventure education circles, a gradual swell of interest in bringing a gender lens to the examination of issues, theory and practice within the field has emerged. Mirroring the progress of feminist studies, early efforts in this area (Hardin, 1980; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1987; Mitten, 1985; Yerkes & Miranda, 1984) tended to concentrate on women's and girls' perceptions, and gender differences in behaviors, development, and needs. Such authors and researchers have been responsible for articulating the uneasiness felt by many feminist outdoor educators about gender equity issues within our programs. It is, time, however, to move beyond a mode of thought that views men's experiences and women's experiences as essentially *different.*

Although feminist theory has been subjected to lively debate and undergone sophisticated shifts in the ways of conceptualizing and analyzing gender, much of the literature coming out of the outdoor field is still centered on women and difference. As Bell (1997) so clearly asked, "Has the dialogue on the nature of gender and associated social issues not changed in the past decade?" (p. 143). Henderson, Winn, and Roberts (1996) voiced similar concerns and asked for a more sophisticated analysis of gender. We need to focus on gender processes and the constructed meanings that create and reinforce difference, not merely view difference as "given" based on a biological dualism that finds little support when held to the test of credible research. Basing distinctions between individuals on taken-for-granted, binary sex categories creates a tendency to simply replace the sex categories with similarly defined gender categories and roles. This leads to a simplistic view of "sex" as the biological and physiological characteristics that allow one to classify individuals as male or female, and "gender" as the culturally constructed behavioral and psychological characteristics associated with being either male or female. However, within feminist literature, there has been a move away from conceptualizing gender as an individual attribute and toward an understanding of gender as process: that is, a conception of gender relations as an interplay between social practice and social structure (Connell, 1987). In this light, gender can be viewed as "the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category" (West & Zimmerman, 2000, p. 132).

This study is part of a larger project that examined the significance of the gender system working within and through an outdoor adventure education program for adolescents. Although the categories female and male were used to describe the claimed and ascribed identities of the participants, the study was designed to explore the implications of the gender system with reference to agency and empowerment for adolescent girls, not to differentiate between "essential" female and male experiences. The data was not analyzed to make statistical inferences about girls and boys as homogeneous groups. It was viewed in terms of how different ranges of gender behavior among the participants influenced the working of the groups within the program, and how this influenced the experience for different individuals.

The intent of the present analysis is to focus on one aspect of significance found within the larger study: the nature and purpose of gender stereotyping. Three specific questions emerged

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in the context of this outdoor adventure education program:

1. What is the nature of stereotyping?
2. What does gender stereotyping accomplish?
3. How does gender stereotyping work?

In the context of this study, a stereotype is a "standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment" (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary Online, 2002). A gender stereotype, therefore, is such a mental picture about what it means to be female or male. The metaphor used throughout this paper relates gender stereotypes to the "dress" that we are seen to wear or are forced to wear. Sometimes we fit ourselves into this dress, even when it is tight and constricting. Sometimes, we cast this dress aside and replace it with a new one. Sometimes the outside world still sees us in our old dress and does not acknowledge the new attire. And sometimes we demonstrate all of the outward signs of a particular type of dress code, but no one pressures us to change into the appropriate dress, instead allowing us to masquerade in other costumes. Through greater understanding of how gender stereotypes (and dress codes) operate and what they accomplish, I hope to give some insight into the issue of gender equity in education and to contribute to an ongoing discussion in outdoor education that is grounded in gender theory.

The conceptual framework and the methodological approach was an interplay between the social construction of gender and Giddens' (1976, 1999) theory of structuration. Gender can be understood as a social construction, but without some clear avenue for agency within this construction, there is no way forward in attempting to change the gender system. Giddens' theory allows for the presence of agency amongst social actors. Although reproduced social practices (i.e., social systems) are recursive across time and space (and gender practices certainly are), and although the structures (i.e., rules of transformation and resources) that allow for this binding of time and space of social systems are resistant to change, resistant to change, the "knowledgeability" of human actors makes change possible.

METHODS

Setting and Participants

This study was conducted at a residential Australian outdoor education center. The center is maintained as part of the Queensland State Education System and is staffed by registered teachers. It is situated in a rural area of the state with easy access to waterways, national parks, state forests, and private land. It operates throughout the school year to address the educational needs of schools within the state of Queensland, mainly through individually designed five-day programs that emphasize personal and social development through an outdoor adventure experiential learning model. The schools that participated in this study chose a combination of residential and off-site experiences. Program elements included initiative tasks, high and low ropes courses, rock climbing, canoeing, and, depending on the age of the participants and the requirements of the school, a two to four day backpacking trip. Eight groups were recruited to participate in the study (one group from each of eight different schools, for a total of 138 participants). Participation by individual students was voluntary. Ages of the students ranged from 12-16 years. Five schools came from suburban areas and three schools came from rural cities or towns. Participants were predominantly Caucasian, with little ethnic diversity within the groups.

Initial contacts were made with schools two to four months ahead of their scheduled programs at the center. A site visit was then made to each school that agreed to be a part of the study. This visit included meeting with students to give a broad explanation of the study. It was presented as an investigation of group behavior and communication and how adolescent girls and boys worked and interacted in an outdoor education program. All data collection procedures were explained as well as the role of the researcher as a participant observer within the group. Time was also spent informally getting to know the students and answering questions.

Based on this meeting, students indicated on their school camp application forms their willingness or otherwise to participate in the study. The students eventually assigned to the study group (by the school organizer, not the researcher) signed assent forms and returned parental/guardian informed consent forms. Teachers assigned to the study group also signed informed consents. Each group was led by two teachers, one being a teacher from the school who was not an outdoor specialist, and one being a teacher from the Center who was highly skilled and experienced in leading and facilitating outdoor adventure activities.

Data Collection Methods

The multiplicity of meanings in social situations and the importance of being able to see participant behavior in context were factors that led to a naturalistic research design. The field research extended over a period of five months from July to November 1999. This field involvement included the following conditions: living on-site for five months at the outdoor education center and interacting on a daily basis with center staff and visiting-schools, recruitment trips to schools to make initial contacts with students, participating with each study group in the five-day program at the center, and follow-up visits to schools after they had completed the program at the center.

The research questions were broadly defined and not framed with predetermined hypotheses, and a feminist perspective was used as the focus of inquiry. This perspective "presumes the importance of gender in human relationships and societal processes and *orients* the study in that direction" (Patton, 1990, p. 86). A qualitative inquiry framework was used for the collection and analysis of data.

A multi-method approach to data collection was chosen to view the gender processes within the groups in some depth, to relate the observations made within the groups to the observations made about the philosophy and management of the outdoor education center, and to relate these observations to the life experiences of the participants and the climate and philosophy of the schools from which the students came. In qualitative research, the use of multiple data sources and methods (data triangulation) increases both reliability and internal validity (Merriam, 1988; Patton, 1990).

The methods used were as follows:

- direct observation – within the groups, and as a member of the center community (through participant observation).
- open-ended interviewing (through informal conversations, and a general interview guide approach – students and teachers were interviewed individually at the end of every program, and group interviews were conducted four to five weeks after students returned to their schools). The student interview guide is summarized in Table 1.
- document review (through student journals, and through school and center program documentation such as the schools' goals and objectives for the programs, and post-program evaluations of students and teachers).

Note taking and audiotapes were used to keep an accurate record of observations, conversations and interviews.

The challenge of qualitative analysis is to begin to interpret data as soon as observations commence, and to allow that data to direct the course of future data collection and observation. The student interview guide (Table 1), for example, was modified for each group and individual depending on the major issues that had emerged throughout the week, and on the way that the answers to questions directed the conversation. In one group, for example, there were twelve girls and five boys. Several of the girls were thought to be popular among both girls and boys, and were thought of as leaders within the school. All of the boys, however, were thought to be on the "fringe" in the school social climate. They were described by themselves and by several of the girls as "nerdy" or not "popular." Given these circumstances, many of the students

TABLE 1
Student Interview Guide

Tell me about your family. How many brothers and sisters do you have? Whom do you live with?
What people in this group did you know fairly well before this week? Tell me about them.
How has it been getting to know different people this week?
When have you felt supported by different people or by the group?
Were there any times you felt that individuals or the group didn't support you?
What has been your overall feeling about the week? Explain.
What has it been like to work with this group? How have we handled things?
What sort of roles did you see different people taking in the group?
Do you think our group would have worked the same if it had more girls/boys in it? Explain.
Did the girls and the boys approach tasks the same way? Explain.
How would you sum up the week?

were surprised to find that they liked each other and enjoyed working together. The perceptions about self, social relations, and new friendships then became an interesting topic to explore in one-on-one interviews. Similarly, the questions for the group interview back at school were formulated to focus on issues or incidents that occurred for that particular group during their week at the center, and to probe into concepts that had emerged from preliminary analysis of the data.

The complete data analysis process included the simultaneous techniques of discovery, coding and displaying data, and interpreting data in its context (as outlined by Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). All data were reduced to text and then further reduced through condensation. Themes relating to gendered interactions and meanings within the groups were then drawn out and developed. The text was reduced in two ways. After sections of field notes were reviewed, a summary sheet was made that included the main issues emerging from that chunk of data, how these issues related to gender, questions arising directly from the data, and concerns about data collection procedures (e.g., the transcripts were viewed to analyze the way that the researcher phrased questions). This information was used to guide the continuing work in the field. The second method of condensation that was used was to organize the text and filter out extraneous material. In one instance, for example, a recorded description of a group initiative task was transcribed to several pages of text. This was reduced to give a brief description of the activity and to highlight salient observations made by the researcher, as well as comments that were made by students and teachers. In the case of interviews, groups of questions that centered on a common theme were summarized. The participant's answers were then recorded as blocks of text rather than as individual fragments. Text that held no meaning was removed.

After reading and rereading the summaries and the reduced text, the words were further reduced by coding them with conceptual descriptors (i.e., open coding). This was done by using a constant comparison technique where slices of data were open coded, then reread for clarification and adjustment of concepts, then reread again until a valid interpretation of the data were made (as outlined by Henderson & Bialeschki, 1995). This technique was continued across different slices of data, and the concepts further refined. Different data sets, such as the individual groups, center teachers and school teachers, researcher observations, participant interviews, and student journals were also compared. Using the same technique as described above, an axial coding system was developed that grouped concepts into higher order categories and developed connections between categories (as described by Pandit, 1996). An example of the documenting of concepts and categories is shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Gender Stereotyping:
Concepts and Categories Linkage

Concepts	**Categories**
Handling Tools Task Accomplishment Planning/Doing Problem Solving Maintaining Relationships Strength Resistance Competition Voice	Gender Roles ↓ Refined to: Gendered Roles
Gendered Roles: • boy/girl strengths • planning versus doing • bitchiness • leadership styles • bossiness • clown/joker • competition • aggression • maintaining relationships Resistance Sexism	Gender stereotyping
Gendered Help • avoiding physical help • asking for physical help • offering physical help • accepting physical help Gendered Rewards Gendered Sanctions Resistance Voice/Silencing	Sexism • benevolent • hostile
Gender Stereotyping Sexism: • benevolent • hostile Resistance Voice/Silencing	Power and Control

Reliability (or consistency) was addressed through triangulation of multiple methods, through thorough documentation and through check-coding. When the first set of field notes were transcribed, initial coding ideas were discussed with an administrative member of the center staff. This person was familiar with the working of the center and could offer valuable insights as the concepts were developed. With refining of the codes, an inter-rater reliability of 90% was reached. In the initial stages, each coder also recoded their own work three to five days apart to ensure that there was a high degree of internal consistency.

RESULTS

Gender stereotypes emerged as a recurring theme in terms of both stated views and the behaviors of the participants. This focused the analysis on trying to understand three main issues with respect to gender stereotyping in the context of this outdoor adventure education program:

1. What was the nature of gender stereotyping?
2. What did gender stereotyping accomplish?
3. How did gender stereotyping work?

The Nature of Stereotyping

Many students, both girls and boys, stated in general conversations that they did not believe that girls and boys were very different in their abilities. Here is an example of this stated by a 16-year-old girl when asked if girls and boys work at things the same way:

> I think everyone pretty much has the same ideas about things, because we are all working at the same level ... in all the groups that were working. And we all have to work together. We all think the same.

However, within this same conversation, she tended to highlight differences rather than similarities between girls and boys.

> Question: Do you think that if we had more boys in the group, our group would be the same or different?
> Answer: Definitely different. With things like the hike the other day, the guys tend to be a lot stronger than the girls, and they can go a lot further. And if there were less girls, it would be less people wanting to rest, and I think the boys would be making it harder.

The belief that boys are stronger than girls was a recurring theme throughout all of the groups, with this idea being stated many times by both girls and boys. When using the word "strong", there was usually an assumption that strength would automatically be associated with physical strength.

> I am more of a stronger person so I help people along. Because we need more muscle. Like we did an activity today where we had to lift people through and we needed strength for people lifting people through (comment from a 15-year-old boy).

> Because with things like the hike the other day the guys tend to be a lot stronger than the girls and they can go a lot further (16-year-old girl).

Such ideas were voiced even though the notion of different strengths within the group was discussed on many occasions during group processing sessions facilitated by the teachers, and during interviews.

The belief that boys are stronger than girls played itself out on many occasions within the groups. For example, on a difficult hike that required the crossing and re-crossing of a fast flowing river, boys did most of the passing of backpacks. The center teacher (i.e., the experienced outdoor instructor) tried to intervene and placed girls in positions where it would be logical for them to help. For the most part, however, the boys continued to step forward to lift and pass packs, and the girls continued either to ask them to do so or to acquiesce to the routine. The teacher from that school reinforced the behavior. He encouraged the boys to do the lifting and extra carrying and encouraged the girls to give their packs to the boys. In conversations with the researcher, he stated his belief that boys are naturally stronger than girls are, and that it was a matter of efficiency to have the boys do more of the physical tasks. This was an example of how leadership and school climate influenced the beliefs and actions of group members.

Another commonly held belief was that boys are practical and just "do" things, whereas girls plan and think ahead.

> I think that the girls like to contemplate their next move a lot more than the guys. The guys seem more spontaneous in the actions they take. They want to "do" things, but if it doesn't work out they are changing as they go along. The girls are thinking ahead (comment from 15-year-old boy).

> It is the usual boy thing, a lot of it. We will just go out and do it where the girls would consider more the emotional part of things (comment from school teacher).

> The boys always jump in and do it and the girls always sit back and think, "What if we do this, and that, and that?" The boys are, I found in myself, I see something and OK, let's go and do it. The girls were like I don't know. A couple of the rivers, I know like I could jump it and some of the girls couldn't even make it half way. Then you have to go back and help the girls across (comment from 16-year-old-boy).

This "doing versus thinking" stereotype also manifested itself in some of the actions and behaviors within other groups. An example of this was with a group of 16-year-old students who were on a strenuous four-day backpacking trip. A number of boys were constantly taking the lead and pressing the pace. The center teacher tried to circumvent this by changing the leaders on a regular basis and encouraging girls to take a turn at leading. The trail was not well defined

and it was easy to go off trail. When the girls were in the lead they tended to stop whenever there was some uncertainty about the trail, consult the map, and scout out the way ahead. At those times, the boys who liked to be in the front would go past the girl or girls in front, and just lead the group off in what they thought was the "approximate" direction. On several occasions, the group ended up walking over more difficult terrain, but the strategy of the boys of "just doing it" was never questioned. Neither was it questioned that the girls who were trying to think ahead lost the leadership position during the process. Students recognized that there were many different ways of being a leader, but when they discussed the day's events they would usually describe the people who were at the head of the line during the hike as the "leaders" of the day.

One group did not demonstrate this pattern at all. This was a group of 12-year-olds who were happy to share the leadership on the trail between girls and boys, and both girls and boys usually planned and thought ahead rather than rushing into route choices. This, according to the school teacher, was how they were encouraged to work in their classroom at school. It was an indication that the differentiation of roles based on gender that was observed in the other groups was a learned behavior.

Other commonly held beliefs were that boys are clowns and that girls are bossier than boys are.

> The boys are more funny, I guess. They clown around more. The girls are more straight, bossy type people (comment from 15-year-old boy).

The girls were also seen to be less competitive than boys, and better than boys at relating to people.

> Guys are more competitive. They like to compete with the other guys. The boys don't care about competing with the girls (comment from 14-year-old girl).

> The guys are more argumentative than the girls. It's territory and stuff (comment from 16-year-old boy).

> She is really caring and she just took care of everyone, even if it was like a little thing. She would like clean and be the Mom of the group (comment from 16-year-old boy).

Girls were also often described as being "bitchy". Bitchiness is defined here as "characterized by malicious, spiteful or arrogant behavior" (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary OnLine, 2002). It is most often used to describe the behavior of women and girls, rather than men and boys.

> Girls can be really snide and bitchy to each other (comment from 12-year-old girl).

> I was really surprised that the girls all got on so well together this week. Like, when girls are together they are usually bitchy towards each other (comment from 15-year-old girl).

This type of comment was repeated by at least one girl in every group and by some boys throughout the groups.

In summary, the following recurring gender stereotypes were described and acted upon: boys are physically stronger than girls; boys are practical and do things whereas girls plan and think ahead; boys are clowns; girls are bitchy; girls are bossier than boys; boys are more competitive than girls; and girls have better relationship skills than boys. All girls did not act in the same way, just as not all boys acted in the same way. The group interactions, however, were strongly influenced by the pervasiveness of gender-stereotyped beliefs.

What Gender Stereotyping Accomplished

The result of differentiating between gender roles had both positive and negative effects. Using stereotypes to describe gender roles helped

to reinforce gender identity, something that was strongly felt and voiced by both girls and boys. This claiming of gender identity tended to provide safety and stability for individuals. Even those participants, both girls and boys, who did not play their roles according to the stereotyped scripts, strongly identified with their ascribed gender identities. However, stereotyping also placed limits on perceived abilities.

> Question: Do you think the girls could have done this trip by themselves?
> Answer: I am not too sure about that. I was just talking about that with Julie because we didn't think it would be very good because the guys, they have more strength than the girls generally. So if there is anything that has to be done and you have to climb a cliff and pass packs, if there were no guys, we would have a bit of trouble (comment from 16-year-old girl).

A group from another school, however, had chosen to have an all girls group for their backpacking trip. The general perception within that group was that they had achieved much more than they thought they were capable of, and they had achieved it without the help of boys.

> Question: So do you think we've accomplished more or less being all girls?
> Answer: More. We've done a lot of things we didn't think we could do, like climbing the mountain. Two mountains. And then having the injuries and all that, and I think we've accomplished a lot (comment from 15-year-old girl).

Gender stereotyping also accorded different statuses based on perceived (and acted) roles. Physical strength was accorded great status within the groups, and that was a role that was predominantly claimed by and accorded to boys. There were many instances of girls displaying physical strength and offering to lend physical assistance. Rarely, however, did a boy accept such help, especially if it could be construed that he was not strong enough to accomplish the task himself. In the case of girls who helped other girls in a physical manner, there was a real sense of selected vision. Their efforts were often not seen and not acknowledged, by either girls or boys. In one group discussion around the campfire at night, the students started to talk about the efforts that everyone had put in that day. One girl had sprained her ankle, so the group had to go slower. Several students took some of her gear so that her pack would be lighter. One of the people who had taken a lot of the gear was a girl who was physically capable, always kept up with whatever pace the group set, and acted as a quiet organizer within the group. She kept people on task without drawing attention to herself. During the discussion, several boys were mentioned and thanked for the way they had helped the group get through the day. Anne's efforts, however, were completely overlooked until mentioned by the center teacher. The "dress" of strength was not the outfit that was granted to girls – at least not until it was pointed out and legitimated by the center teacher. For a girl of this type, although the dress did fit, the group did not recognize that it was hers or that she was wearing it.

The strength element that was most often associated with girls was in terms of being a strong organizer, although sometimes this idea was followed with a negative connotation. As stated by one of the boys when distinguishing girls' roles within the group: "Actually the stronger people, they are more bossy. People like Kay, and people like that." "Girl" strength was also not seen as being as valuable to the group as "boy" strength was. This type of gender stereotyping reinforced a hierarchical gender system that accorded greater status to boys.

> Question: So you would say that the boys had a more physical role in the group?
> Answer: Definitely more physical. They were stronger and had more muscles (16-year-old boy).
> Question: Do you think the girls could do it without you?
> Answer: They probably could, but I would like to see it. Some girls stood up, like Amy and a couple of other people.
> Question: Did you see any of the girls at the front for a long period of time?

Answer: Karen and Wendy stayed up front for a while the second and third day because they wanted to be up front, but Ryan and them usually went past them and went faster.
Question: Do you think the guys felt more comfortable in front, in general?
Answer: Yeah. I think they've just got that little bit extra control of everyone.
Question: They've got it, or they like to have it?
Answer: They've got it and they still like to have it.
Question: Is it something they're used to having?
Answer: Yeah. Especially like with Ryan. He likes to get everything done with real quick. That is why he was always up front.
Question: How do you think that a girl who would like to have control, how is she going to get it?
Answer: She is going to have to force her way up there because, like, Ryan and them are not going to give way too easy. They just have to force their way up there and stay up there.

There were girls in all of the groups who did "force" their way to the front in a number of physical tasks. Those girls, however, although demonstrating physical capabilities, were usually recognized more within the group for their organizational abilities. Once again, individuals were forced to wear (at least in terms of what people saw them wearing) a dress that did not fit. In most of the hikes, the girls who did stay at the front were those who did it quietly while allowing the boys such as Ryan to be in the first position in the line. The center teacher, in such situations, usually changed the leaders and navigators so that both girls and boys had a chance to lead. The Ryans of the group, however, would constantly chide against this and get back to the front.

Question to 15-year-old girl: Did you get to take a spot at the front at all?
Answer: Yes.
Question: How did that feel?
Answer: It is a lot better than being at the back. Being at the back makes you feel a bit slow and not very good about yourself, but being up front, you keep up with the pace a bit better and you feel like you are going somewhere.
Question: How did it feel when you led the group?
Answer: It was a bit annoying at times, if you walk in the wrong direction.
Question: Did you feel in control?
Answer: Yeah.
Question: Was it a good feeling to have that control and make decisions?
Answer: Yeah.
Question: Do you often get to do that in a physical situation?
Answer: No.
Question: Who do you think gets more control? What sort of person?
Answer: A person who talked a lot and is very loud.
Question: How can you get more practice at having the job if you are not very loud?
Answer: Trying constantly to speak.
Question: When you were leading did you feel that someone was behind you and ready to get on you?
Answer: Yeah. It does feel like that. I think a lot of people like to take the front spot and get to lead the group.
Question: Who would you say were the people who most wanted to get past you?
Answer: The guys.
Question: They liked being up front?
Answer: They thought that the girls shouldn't take the front and that the guys should.

To summarize, gender stereotyping provided structure and order that gave a sense of safety and familiarity to many of the participants. It also regulated behavior, placed limits on perceived abilities of many students, and accorded different situational statuses to girls and boys. In this structure, it was predominantly boys who were accorded the highest status, based on their perceived greater physical strength, as well as on the way that they claimed

leadership and power. It was more difficult for girls' voices to be heard within this structure. Although some girls and boys resisted their stereotyped roles and transgressed the boundaries of "appropriate" action, the pervasive gender stereotyping within groups often led to silencing or distorted vision about what "dresses" some of the girls and boys were wearing.

How Gender Stereotyping Worked

In terms of how gender stereotyping worked, the main issues were power and control. A pattern emerged that Glick and Fiske (1996) would label as the operation of hostile and benevolent sexism. In the context of this study, sexism can be viewed as "behavior, conditions, or attitudes that foster stereotypes of social roles based on sex" (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary OnLine, 2002). Benevolent sexism was the more usual form of controlling gender roles. The physical offers of help given by the boys to the girls (and willingly accepted by the girls) were usually given with "love". The result, however, was a reinforcement of the girls' subordinate role within the group, based on the weight given to the importance of "boy" strength.

> Question to 16-year-old boy: What did you see as your role in the group?
> Answer: To help out Kathy and helping carry packs and stuff. When things were getting heavy, take stuff out and put it in my pack.
> Question: What did you see as the girls' roles in the group?
> Answer: I don't know.

Many other boys and girls could articulate important roles for girls, as individuals and as a collective (although physical strength was rarely mentioned). However, this inability to articulate the girls' roles was a common response from boys of all ages. Some boys were sure of their own roles in the group, but weren't sure what the girls did. When this boy was later asked with whom he would like to work if he did the trip again, he at first mentioned only boys. When asked if he'd like to go with any of the girls and why, he said, "Oh yeah. So they could cook." The interesting thing about this statement is the fact that the girls did not do all of the cooking and cleaning. Many boys were both willing and able to do these tasks, and enjoyed doing them. Once again, there was selected vision regarding gendered roles.

Although there were no instances of overtly hostile behavior, on some occasions, girls and boys who stepped too far out of their prescribed roles were brought strongly back into line by the more powerful boys in the group. The methods employed were using sarcasm and bitchiness. These methods were more often applied to girls, as most of the boys seemed to be aware of the position they held in the power hierarchy and knew how to stay within the confines of their roles. As stated previously, bitchiness is "characterized by malicious, spiteful or arrogant behavior" (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary OnLine, 2002) and is associated with girls rather than boys. Bitchy behavior, although often ascribed to girls, (this was a general "girl" behavior that participants were surprised not to see in the group), was never attributed to boys. The behaviors that some boys demonstrated, however, fitted the definition of bitchy. On one occasion, for example, a 16-year-old girl had taken one of the most powerful boys to task for not doing his share of work within the group. He was also very quick witted, and one of the "jokers" in the group. When Raechel confronted him, his response was to make a joke of her tantrum and then to continue to refer to Raechel's "narni" (Australian vernacular for throwing a tantrum) on any occasion that Raechel tried to assert herself within the group. The outward response of the group was to laugh at Alan's comments and jokes (although his comments were never recognized as being bitchy). However, in final interviews with group members, some students revealed that they thought that Raechel had been justified in her comments to Alan. They never confronted Alan about his behavior, though, and they never associated his behavior with bitchiness. Bitchiness was a term that was correctly defined by many students, but only associated with girls. Alan was never taken to task and was never seen to be wearing that "dress". In the mind of one student, things had resolved themselves by the end of the week.

Question: Any other thoughts for the week?
Answer: There were a couple of conflicts through the week. There was the work, but that resolved itself. Raechel's narnie. What she did. We got that worked out.
Question: Do you think she was justified?
Answer: She was right, because Alan got on my nerves for a little while and I had to just slack off.
Question: So do you think it was getting to Raechel a little bit when Alan kept on her and everyone was laughing with him?
Answer: Yeah. But she was right. They hardly did anything (referring to Alan and another boy in that cooking group), and someone had to stand up to him. And she did.
Question: Is that why Alan kept on her for the rest of the week?
Answer: Alan knew she was right and he doesn't want to say that. He doesn't like having people above him.
Question: So you think we managed to work that one out?
Answer: We got that one taken care of.

The result for Raechel of having "taken care of that one" was that she was effectively silenced for the rest of the week.

Summary

How gender stereotyping worked and what it accomplished were closely related. Stereotyping worked through the assertion of power and control. This can be seen in how Alan focused the attention of his altercation with Raechel on her female tantrums. Stereotyping also bestowed or limited power and control, as demonstrated by Alan's silencing of Raechel and his silencing of the rest of the group.

Different types and levels of power were observed. The most obvious form was seen in who set the "tone" of the group. In most cases, a boy or group of boys who were loud, strong and popular set the tone. Alan regularly set the tone in his group, but he was not the only person who had power. Some boys asserted their power through physical strength and by taking the lead on the trail. Some girls asserted their power through group maintenance tasks. Some girls and boys demonstrated their empowerment through resistance of gender-stereotyped roles. Anne, for example, functioned well in both physical strength and relationship realms. Although her physical strength was sometimes overlooked, it was still there to be seen by the more observant participants. It was an act of resistance against the unwritten rules of gender behavior.

CONCLUSIONS

This study addressed the nature and purpose of gender stereotyping in an outdoor education program for adolescents. Gender was conceptualized as a process rather than as an individual attribute. Although participants identified themselves categorically, and although categorical gender descriptors were used when presenting findings, the study does not attempt to portray essential differences between girls and boys. There was a wide range of behavior demonstrated by both girls and boys. Some girls, for example, took on stereotypically male roles, and vice versa. However, the entrenched belief in gender stereotypes, and the enactment and enforcement of them by many individuals, shaped the extent to which resistance and gender transgression were possible. These things also shaped the power structures within the groups. There was a predominantly male power structure legitimized largely through the stereotypical portrayal of boys as physically stronger than girls and more capable than girls of taking "action" in physical situations.

The trends reported here are important in both a theoretical and practical sense. The fact that behaviors were not consistent across sex, and that girls and boys sometimes experimented with different roles and challenged the observed stereotypical behaviors, lends support to the concept of gender as a social construct that is produced and reproduced through the actions of individuals and social groups. Connell (1987) conceptualized a gendering process that is

grounded in an historical context. "Change is produced by human agency; conversely all practice occurs in specific settings and has a particular place in the sequence of events. There is a long-term historical dynamic of practice and structural transformation" (p. 149). Practice can be viewed in two ways. In the first, individuals are agents whose practice (or actions) can transform social systems. In the second sense, these agents, through their relationships within the system, are also taught the accepted practices that maintain the system. Gender practice, such as gender stereotyping, can be viewed in this manner. There is a long history of gendered relationships based on an unequal power hierarchy between men and women. Practicing stereotyped gender roles supports the gender system, but the practice of transgressive gender roles can transform that system.

Understanding these theoretical implications can help practitioners to implement outdoor programs that support and encourage girls (and boys) to experiment with and transgress gender roles. Many outdoor programs claim to foster individual empowerment. The strong link in this study between gender stereotyping, power, empowerment, and silencing suggests gender issues may be extremely important to the formulation and presentation of programs that are empowering to all participants. Confronting gender practices in outdoor programs may not be an easy task. Some social structures (rules and resources) are more deeply entrenched and institutionalized than others:

> Those types of rule which are of most significance for social theory are locked into the reproduction of institutionalized practices, that is, practices most deeply sedimented in time-space. By rules that are intensive in nature, I mean formulae that are constantly invoked in the course of day to day activities, that enter into the structuring of much of the texture of everyday life. (Giddens, 1999, p. 125)

Gender structures could be seen to fall squarely within this category. Because they are such an intrinsic part of our social practices, they are likely to slip under our radar and permeate themselves throughout our programs, with little attention paid to them. Studies such as this one that provide an in depth look at the processes occurring within outdoor programs are important to our future practice.

The results presented here are patterns and trends observed in one particular place at one point in time. It should not be construed that *all* girls or *all* boys felt and acted in a particular way. Neither should it be generalized to all groups involved in outdoor adventure education.

What can be suggested, however, is that these patterns can be viewed as part of a gender system operating within these groups and this program, and that these patterns give the gender system continuity both within and through the program and within the general society in which these participants live. There are structures (rules) that act to keep the system functioning in a way that may accord different levels of power to individuals, based on gender. Within this system, however, the rules can be negotiated and transgressed, as well as enforced.

It is not through an intuitive sense that our programs don't work for girls, or through attempts to restructure our programs based on girls being different from boys that we will achieve gender equity within outdoor education, and within education in general. It is through more focused attempts to question what the gender order looks like in different aspects of our world, how it works, how it is maintained, and why it works in the way that it does that this goal will be reached. With more research focusing on understanding gender relations in the outdoors, we may even learn, as hooks (1994) admonishes us, to "teach to transgress" We may be able to empower our participants, whether they are girls or boys, to wear that dress if it fits, or if it feels comfortable and empowering. And they may also feel empowered to rip it off when they recognize it as constricting.

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